

1333 East 10th Avenue
Denver 3, Colorado
June 3, 1946

Mrs. M. L. Cummins
1710 Main Avenue
Durango, Colorado

My dear Mrs. Cummins:

I am indeed sorry that I did not have a chance to talk with you after the meeting in Durango. I agree with you entirely that we should bring all of our difficulties out into the open for full and frank discussion. I believe that your question did great good.

It is quite true that in the past many physicians had opposed preventive medicine, that is to say public health work, and that a few still do, now, however, in rapidly diminishing numbers. In the first place, preventive medicine is new, limited to this century and it is characteristic of many minds to react against new ideas. When the first graduates of our Public Health Schools started their work the reaction, pretty violent at that, was against reporting communicable disease. I remember well the fight to get tuberculosis reported. That difficulty now has been completely overcome and the present problem is due to extreme fear of physicians of socialized medicine. They don't seem to realize that active sound programs of preventive medicine tend to lessen the pressure for socialized medicine.

The young men coming out of the medical schools today have had instruction in preventive medicine, understand it and favor it. A very few of the older doctors will never change their opposition. I do not blame the doctors for not wanting the government to run the practice of medicine; certainly our fight to get state, county and city government to set up good Health Departments would not encourage any one to entrust wider responsibilities to the care of government. We want good health departments to organize and carry out programs for health entirely out of the range of the practicing physician; wide spread immunizations, improvement of the quality and standardization of milk, inspection of restaurants and food handling, rat control, engineering problems for pure drinking water, for prevention of stream pollution and for proper disposal of sewage. These are not the functions of the practicing physicians but they are programs that every thinking physician must support. I think a question, such as yours, asking the doctors to stop and think whether they are for or against a constructive program to lower our unnecessarily high death rates very wholesome. We want all the doctors with us and are trying to get them. Their official journal, The Journal of the American Medical Association, has come out for preventive medicine and for support of Public Health Departments, but it is hard to get the word down to the last man. It is my belief that great progress has been made and that now only a very few physicians are opposing progressive health measures. Again, referring to socialized medicine, I hope that the agitation will spur the doctors to solve

their problems by their own thinking before the matter is taken out of their hands.

The real opposition to the Health bills the last time was not, I believe, of the practicing physicians, but rather thru the pressure groups, the Denver City machine, the Milk interests and the Chiropractors. The opposition of the City Machine is political, they have fought and will fight to hold every bit of patronage in their own hands, and they are sure, and correctly so, that if we can secure a mechanism for getting and retaining highly trained professional personnel in our Health Departments their interests will be in matters of health and not in machine politics.

The milk interests represent a very interesting problem. The State may now develop a really large dairy industry capable of markedly increasing the wealth of the state. The advanced thinkers in the group, both the large and the small producers, now see that pure sanitary milk would be an asset to them and not a liability, so there may be great progress for milk sanitation in the near future. We believe that inspection of the health aspects of milk should be under the Health Department and there may still be some active opposition to this but we are very hopeful in regard to milk sanitation for Colorado.

Concerning Chiropractors, please read the article in the June Readers Digest on their history. They cannot fit into a Health Program because their theories of disease have no relation to modern medicine. They are classified under the healing arts and they will continue to try to block Health legislation in order to get a chance to sign death certificates. This you see would make it quite impossible to have Vital Statistics bearing any relation to the true cause of death. Therefore, if they succeed in getting crippling amendments the Doctors will think it wiser to abandon the bills at a given session of the Legislature rather than wreck Public Health Departments.

We will send you shortly a special study of Dr. Buck's recommendations that will form the basis of our new proposed laws for the next Legislature, and soon after that a draft of the laws themselves. The progress you have made toward multiple County Health unit in Durango is really remarkable and I thank you for your question at the meeting, for your letter, and for your great interest in our program.

Cordially yours,

Florence R. Sabin